

M-1 RAIL

1426 Woodward Avenue
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226
313-528-3044
M-1 RAIL.COM

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CHAIRMAN
PENSKE CORPORATION

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EXECUTIVE OFFICER
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February 25, 2015

Dear Members of the Oversight and Ethics, Transportation and Infrastructure,
and Transportation Appropriations Committees:

M-1 RAIL is a partnership between the business, philanthropic, and public sectors to build and operate a fixed-rail streetcar system in Detroit's urban core. M-1 RAIL's private and philanthropic donors have committed over \$100 million to the project, which is currently under construction. M-1 RAIL is expected to be a powerful catalyst for investment and growth in Detroit -- and for the development of the broader regional transit system Southeast Michigan needs.

From our experience over the past several years, we know first-hand the complexities of rail car procurement. We also know the professionalism of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) through our close work with them, and the Office of Rail in particular. They have been a terrific partner on the M-1 RAIL project. On the Ann Arbor – Detroit commuter rail initiative, MDOT took a calculated risk in procuring the rail cars, as they are a long-lead item that has to be in place for service to start. We understand that situation. Sometimes, as in our private business endeavors, timing is not perfect. These railcars, however, are good investments that will last many decades.

Ultimately, the question we need to be asking is how we can accelerate the commuter rail program and get these cars into productive use as soon as possible. Commuter rail service holds the promise of significant positive impacts to Detroit and Southeast Michigan. It will connect major economic centers in our region, facilitating business and personal trips, promoting regional economic growth, and improving quality of life.

M-1 RAIL will link to multiple modes of transportation, including the proposed Ann Arbor – Detroit commuter rail. With a connection at the Amtrak station, the streetcar will provide an attractive beginning or ending to the trip - allowing hassle-free transfers between the modern streetcar system and commuter rail. It is time to build the service and put these railcars into operation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Matthew P. Cullen
Chief Executive Officer